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**Protected**

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| Protected  by Mark Ray  In strategizing for change, I find it helps to think in threes. There is something vaguely reassuring about triangles. I frequently use the term 'triangulate' as I seek understanding or consensus. In thinking about changing the code, craft and conventions of school librarianship, I think in terms of three areas of focus--profession, program and place. Profession is about our job and what we do, say and think about serving students and teachers. Program is both the theoretical and actual things that we purport to provide and teach to students and teachers. Place is our space, our collection and the ideas associated with its role both in society and the school. Obviously, they are intricately related to one another. But to avoid feeling overwhelmed with the task at hand, let's break it down into a few obtuse and acute angles. And then we might be able to triangulate what needs be done.  Profession is where we must start. I have long contended that the historical appeal of school librarianship (anachronistic term intended) bears little resemblance to the necessary temperament, aptitudes and philosophy that are now needed for teacher librarianship. In the Mad Men days, a librarian job offered among other things solitude, order, control, constancy, quiet, independence, not to mention a refuge from report cards, parents and yes, even students and teachers. With a proper militaristic, creepy and/or arrogant vibe, a school librarian could be set for a lifelong career (often after leaving the classroom) with little to distract her or him from the important work of ordering magazines, books and keeping the card catalog in order. At first, wonky mavens of print ruled the stacks. When 'media' came into schools during the space race, it additionally appealed to the audio visual set and ushered in a new generation of geeky AV types to manage filmstrips, overhead projectors and projection bulbs.  To be fair, there was an important role for the school librarian--providing resources and information (and equipment) to the school. And it was this role that many librarians prioritized and embraced over others. They took pride and ownership over selecting, ordering, processing, classifying, cataloging and shelving analog materials for which there was no alternative aside from a visit to the public library. In a word, libraries had a virtual monopoly on a school's information and, in many cases, technology needs. Librarians had very real power, providing access to the space where information could be had, the equipment it could be accessed on, not to mention the specific sources for that information. This is not to say that school librarians were secretive control freaks with no interest in teaching, learning, education or human interaction. But I bet you can think of one or two that tended toward monasticism and/or megalomania. And yes, there were a lot of really cool school librarians that held the key to reading and computing kingdoms and for which millions of students look back in fondness. But whether they greeted you with a smile or with a shush, they were de facto lords of information within the school.  Even in the first three decades of the personal computer, libraries maintained their hegemony over access to information. In many cases, the first computers placed in the public setting were in public and school libraries. Non-networked computers required knowledge and software that the library provided. Later networked computers provided access to expensive information sources like Dialog which were often only available in the library. It was not until the commercialization of the Internet in the mid 1990s, the growth of ownership of personal computers and home networking that libraries really faced a challenge to their existence. And even then, it took years before connectivity, content and computers improved to the point where libraries suddenly found themselves stranded on the old highway. With a casual dismissal, perhaps seasoned with a touch of schadenfreude, patrons realized that they suddenly didn't need librarians or the library to provide them information. And before long, a whole generation of millennial learners grew up associating information access not with libraries but with the computer. The fact is simple--people don't really don't need us to provide the information anymore. And that smarts.  As I have mentioned previously, our profession is facing a existential crisis. Both our raison d'etre and our actual existence is being called into question. And this short history of school librarianship sets the context for a necessary re-evaluation of who we are, what we are and where we look for the cues to our future.  I laud the AASL for creatively endorsing a moniker for our profession that is at once traditional and divisive. That's hard to do. I'm sure their adoption of 'school librarian' was intended to stimulate pitched arguments among school information professionals about identity, brand and future viability while a secret task force is quietly developing a job title truly fit for the 21st century. Until that resolution, I'll make due with **teacher librarian**. In Washington State, that descriptor was adopted into law years ago. As such, it's our official job title even if districts opt for retro titles like school librarian, library media specialist. library information specialist, etc.  For years, I poo-pooed these semantic arguments and recall dismissing the title of teacher librarian when it was adopted by the state. In mock protest, I changed my handle to Information Tsar and then later adopted my current *non de guerre*--Slayer of Information Ignorance (with a Black Belt in Think Kwon Do.) At that time, budgets were secure and living was easy. But things have changed. And changing a name is the first step in changing perceptions by others. Frankly, choosing anything different than what you currently call yourself is better than the status quo. Why? Because as trivial as it might seem, a name change signals to others an acknowledgment that something has to change, that you own that change and that it starts with you. Now if you change your name and don't change your MO, then it's both trivial and self-defeating. It's not enough to just change your label and keep yourself buried behind stacks of books in your office.  Teacher librarian is a decidedly utilitarian name, but teachers seem to be content with 'teacher' part. I haven't heard of any organized effort by teachers to resolve to adopt some different job title, despite the screaming need for radical changes to education and classroom instruction. Despite this archaic job title, most teachers still have jobs. As a former library media specialist, I frankly like losing 'specialist' from my name. It belies the inherent generalism of our craft. As the adage goes, librarians don't necessarily know all the answers, but they know how to find them.  Ultimately, I think teacher librarian offers us much more than a dull mashup of two disparate job titles and roles. If we think of teacher librarian as a sort of yin/yang identity, a dynamic is created that serves us well. As a name, teacher librarian collides the historical acquisitional-organizational role of librarian as manager of things against the educational role of teacher as manager of people. To be sure, there is more to teaching than managing people, but teachers are ultimately evaluated on criteria which are fundamentally managerial--student output, achievement, order and control, attendance, etc. And if we accept my short history of school librarianship and its idea that school librarianship was *prima facie* about managing things, then teacher librarian sets up a convenient dialectic. And provocateurs and revolutionaries *love* dialectics.  So how we translate all of this into something that moves us from idea to action? I would propose something pretty simple. And I'm going to set it off to make sure it doesn't get missed. I'll add bold for emphasis.  **Teach more; librarian less.**  If we can accept that the information superhighway has left libraries languishing on the old interstate, then we can let go of our encyclopedias, Dewey Decimality and our desire to sort and manage everything and set up shop at a nearby freeway interchange and teach. Because no one really needs librarians to do much of what they did for decades anymore. And the sooner we acknowledge this, the better. Thankfully, everyone from ISTE to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills acknowledges that ["to be effective in the 21st century, citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills related to information, media and technology."](http://www.p21.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=61&Itemid=120) The problem is that administrators and school boards have NO ONE with the training, time and resources to meet this daunting task. Teachers? Think about it. If you can count on one hand the teachers in your school that consistently and effectively teach critical thinking skills related to information, media and technology, then raise it and give us a jazz hand, because you're either teaching in a private school or have a seriously rocking school program.  What shouldn't be missed is that this language isn't part of a overly complicated AASL resolution but from a concise and elegantly clear framework for 21st century learning. Likewise, the ISTE National Educational Technology Standards are a virtual checklist of skills that can and should be part of your library program. Neither document uses the words *library*, *school librarian*, *MARC*, *OPAC* or the various other titles and acronyms that seem to consume our time, energy and national discussions.  Folks, there is a job out there for us. And we have the necessary DNA to do that job well. But it means taking off our pilled storytelling-puppetshowing-cataloging-bookpreserving-organizing sweater and trading it in for something a little more modern. It also means we take our cues not just from the self-congratulating conventions of ALA and AASL but from other organizations and thinkers that have the ears, the eyes and attention of those making the decisions. The best non-librarian educators, leaders and innovators have created both the challenge and the imperative. We can step up and say, "I like what you're saying and I'll take that challenge." Or we can keep sitting in our rocking chairs listening to AASL telling us how important school librarians are.  The current loss of librarians and libraries is tragic. Not so much because of the loss of people and programs, but because those people and programs are logical, already-paid-for and ready-to-use solutions for 21st century learning challenges that are hiding in plain sight. Maybe it's because principals and board members can't see past the name, the history and that funky sweater. |